

HOUSE BILL 1544

By Staples

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 15,  
relative to state holidays.

WHEREAS, on August 8, 1863, prior to the implementation of President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in East Tennessee, Andrew Johnson, future seventeenth president of the United States and then military governor of Tennessee, freed his slaves in the area of Greeneville, Tennessee, located in Greene County; and

WHEREAS, the African-American community in the vicinity of Greene County soon began to hold annual celebrations on August 8, known as the "Eighth of August Celebration" and "Emancipation Day," which celebrations are documented at least as early as 1875 in *The Greeneville American*, and over one hundred years ago in *The Greeneville Herald* and *Knoxville Sentinel*; and

WHEREAS, "Emancipation Day" has been observed in several neighboring states, including Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Missouri, evidencing the great interest and enthusiasm for "Emancipation Day"; and

WHEREAS, the Beck Cultural Exchange Center has hosted an annual Eighth of August Jubilee for the last five years in commemoration of emancipation in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly recognized August 8 as a day of special observance by passing Chapter 15 of the Public Acts of 2007; and

WHEREAS, Emancipation Day should be a legal holiday instead of a day of special observance; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 15-1-101, is amended by adding the language "August 8, known as "Emancipation Day";" immediately following the language "July 4;"

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 15-2-113, is amended by deleting the section.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.